

# EDIBLE FLOWERS - QUICK FACTS



Throughout the world, since as early as Roman times, flowers have been used to enhance flavor and aroma, add coloring, or as a garnish in cooking. Their uses are numerous. When using flowers in cooking there are precautions you need to take. Some of the common edible flowers you can grow in your garden include marigolds, violets, roses, nasturtiums, pansies, and the bloom of herbs like chives. For a partial list of edible flowers, see the Sources and Resources section.

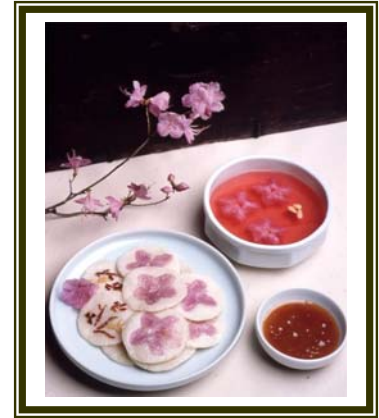
**NOT ALL FLOWERS ARE EDIBLE** – Always correctly identify the flower you wish to eat; do not eat any flower unless you are certain about its identity. Even edible flowers can cause indigestion or allergic reactions if eaten in large amounts.

- Eat only pesticide free plants; always wash and dry your plants; and check for bugs. Always eat a small amount at first. **When in doubt, do without.**
- The source of flowers to be eaten is also very important. Garden center plants may have been treated with systemic pesticides to prevent insect damage or diseases.
- **DO NOT** eat flowers from florists, nurseries, garden centers, or flowers found on the side of the road.
- **DO NOT** use a non-edible flower as a garnish. Just because it is served with food, does not make a flower edible.
- Consume only flowers that you or someone else has grown specifically for that purpose.
- Since many allergies are due to sensitivity to pollen of specific plants, if you have hay fever, asthma or allergies, it is best not to eat flowers
- Introduce flowers into your diet one at a time and in small quantities.
- Edible flowers should be picked as fully open flowers in the cool of the day, after the dew has evaporated. Blossoms should be harvested the day they'll be used; try to pick no more than one day early. Wash the fresh flowers gently and set them aside to dry. Refrigerate them in plastic sandwich bags until you use them
- To be safe, remove the pollen-bearing parts of each edible flower
- Remove the sepals of all flowers except violas, Johnny-jump-ups, and pansies.

- For flowers such as calendula, chrysanthemum, lavender, rose, tulip, and yucca, **only** the flower petals are edible.
- The white base of the petal of many flowers may have a bitter taste and should be removed from flowers such as chrysanthemums, dianthus, marigolds, and roses.
- When serving flowers fresh, add them to your dish just before serving.

#### USES OF EDIBLE FLOWERS:

- Fresh as a garnish or as an integral part of a dish, such as a salad.
- Squash flowers can be fried in light batter or cornmeal.
- Some flowers can be stuffed or used in stir-fry dishes.
- Edible flowers can be candied; frozen in ice cubes and added to beverages; made into jellies and jams; used to make teas or wines; minced and added to cheese spreads, herbal butters, pancakes, crepes, and waffles, or used to decorate a cake
- Many flowers can be used to make vinegars for cooking, marinades, or dressings for salad. SEE BELOW FOR INFORMATION



#### FLAVORED VINEGAR AND OILS – IMPORTANT FACTS and CAUTIONS!

- Flavored vinegars can be safely prepared. They are best stored in the refrigerator.
- **Garlic, vegetable or herb in oil mixtures may support the growth of *C. botulinum* bacteria.** For safety reasons, they should be made fresh. Leftovers should be frozen, refrigerated for use within 10 days, or discarded.
- **IF YOU PLAN TO PREPARE FLAVORED VINEGAR and/or OILS, PLEASE REFER TO THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:**
  - FDA Bulletin: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/ANSWERS/ANS00523.html>
  - <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09340.html>

#### SOURCES and RESOURCES:

FDA Bulletin. 1993. Unrefrigerated Garlic-, Spice-In-Oil Mixes Potentially Hazardous: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/answers/ANS00523.html>

Gegner, Lance. 2004. Edible Flowers. The National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service. 7p. <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/edibleflowers.pdf>

P. Kendall and J. Rausch. 2000. Flavored Vinegars and Oils. Colorado State University Extension. 2p. <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09340.html>

C. Lauderdale, E. Evans. 1999. North Carolina State Extension. Informational Leaflet: Edible Flowers: TABLE 1: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8513.html>

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